

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

P.O. BOX 942896
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001
(916) 653-6624 Fax: (916) 653-9824
calshpo@mail2.quiknet.com



March 19, 2003

REPLY TO: STB030307A

Victoria Rutson, Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis
U.S. Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Construction and Operation Exemption - The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, Merced, Merced County, California.

Dear Ms. Rutson:

Thank you for submitting to our office your March 4, 2003 letter and supporting documentation regarding the proposed construction and operation of an approximately 850-foot rail line near the City of Merced in Merced County, California. The proposed rail line would connect the Quebecor World Inc. (Quebecor) printing and distribution facility in Merced with Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad's existing Stockton Subdivision mainline between Stockton and Bakersfield, California.

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) is seeking our comments on its proposed undertaking in accordance with 36 CFR 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Our review of the submitted documentation leads us to recommend that the STB do the following to fulfill its responsibilities for the identification and evaluation of historic resources for this project as set forth in 36 CFR 800:

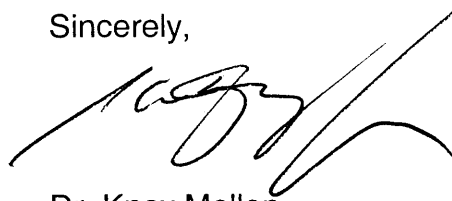
- Establish an Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the project that will determine the scope of the undertaking and its potential to effect historic properties
- Identify and provide information on any historic properties that may be affected by the project and gather sufficient information to evaluate the eligibility of these properties for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This information should include information on the age of the property, its historical significance, if any, as well as historical and/or current photographs of the property.

This letter represents neither acknowledgement that the STB has consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) under any applicable law or regulation nor evidence of satisfactory STB compliance with Section 106 for the undertaking.

We are prepared to provide such evidence in writing after we receive correspondence from STB requesting our comments on its determination that a geographic area associated with this undertaking either does not contain historic properties or does contain historic properties that will not be affected.

Thank you again for seeking our comments on your project. If you have any questions, please contact staff historian Clarence Caesar by phone at (916) 653-8902, or by e-mail at ccaes@ohp.parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Knox Mellon', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Dr. Knox Mellon
State Historic Preservation Officer